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TAGS: PREL PARM UNSC I2
SUBJECT: UN/IRAQ: SYG MAKES STATEMENT TO COUNCIL ON IRAQ,
MARCH 19 (FULL TEXT)

¶1. (U) IN REMARKS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL MARCH 19, SYG ANNAN EXPRESSED REGRET THAT THE COUNCIL DID NOT REACH A COMMON POSITION ON IRAQ, CALLING IT A "SAD DAY" FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. ANNAN STATED THAT "THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTING CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT FALLS ON THE BELLIGERENTS; IN ANY AREA UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION, RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELFARE OF THE POPULATION FALLS ON THE OCCUPYING POWER." THE UN WOULD PROVIDE WHATEVER ASSISTANCE IT COULD TO THE IRAQI PEOPLE "WITHOUT IN ANY WAY ASSUMING OR DIMINISHING THAT ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY." THE FULL TEXT OF THE ANNAN'S SPEECH IS INCLUDED AT PARA 2.

¶2. (U) BEGIN TEXT.

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

EXCELLENCIES,

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I FULLY SHARE THE REGRETS EXPRESSED BY MANY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AT THE FACT THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO REACH A COMMON POSITION. WHATEVER OUR DIFFERING VIEWS ON THIS COMPLEX ISSUE, WE MUST ALL FEEL THAT THIS IS A SAD DAY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

I KNOW THAT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD SHARE THIS SENSE OF DISAPPOINTMENT, AND ARE DEEPLY ALARMED BY THE PROSPECT OF IMMINENT WAR.

LET ME HERE PAY TRIBUTE TO THE UNITED NATIONS STAFF BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND IRAQI WHO HAVE WORKED SO HARD IN IRAQ UP TO THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT. THAT INCLUDES THE INSPECTORS, WHOSE WORK HAS NOW SADLY BEEN SUSPENDED. I WOULD LIKE TO PAY SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO DR. (HANS) BLIX, DR. (MOHAMED) EL BARADEI AND (RAMIRO) LOPEZ DA SILVA, THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR, UNDER WHOSE LEADERSHIP THE STAFF WORKED IN IRAQ.

MR. PRESIDENT, IT IS THE PLIGHT OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE WHICH IS NOW MY MOST IMMEDIATE CONCERN, AND I HAVE BEEN GLAD TO HEAR THAT SENTIMENT SHARED BY ALL THE SPEAKERS IN THIS DEBATE.

IN THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, IRAQIS HAVE BEEN THROUGH TWO MAJOR WARS, INTERNAL UPRISINGS AND CONFLICT, AND MORE THAN A DECADE OF DEBILITATING SANCTIONS.

THE COUNTRY'S VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE HAS BEEN DEVASTATED, SO THAT IT NO LONGER MEETS THE MOST BASIC NEEDS FOR CLEAN WATER, HEALTH OR EDUCATION.

ALREADY, IRAQ'S MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS THE ELDERLY, WOMEN AND CHILDREN, AND THE DISABLED ARE DENIED BASIC HEALTH CARE FOR LACK OF MEDICINE AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT.

ALREADY, NEARLY ONE MILLION IRAQI CHILDREN SUFFER FROM CHRONIC MALNUTRITION.

ALREADY, IRAQIS ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON THE FOOD RATION

WHICH IS HANDED OUT EACH MONTH TO EVERY FAMILY IN THE COUNTRY. FOR MORE THAN SIXTY PER CENT OF THE POPULATION, THIS RATION IS THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME. YET MANY FAMILIES HAVE TO SELL PART OF IT TO BUY CLOTHES OR OTHER ESSENTIALS FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

ALL THAT IS TRUE AS WE SPEAK. AND IN THE SHORT TERM, THE CONFLICT THAT IS NOW CLEARLY ABOUT TO START CAN ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE, PERHAPS MUCH WORSE.

MR. PRESIDENT,

I AM SURE ALL MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL WILL AGREE THAT WE MUST DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO MITIGATE THIS IMMINENT DISASTER, WHICH COULD EASILY LEAD TO EPIDEMICS AND STARVATION.

UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTING CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT FALLS ON THE BELLIGERENTS; IN ANY AREA UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION, RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELFARE OF THE POPULATION FALLS ON THE OCCUPYING POWER.

WITHOUT IN ANY WAY ASSUMING OR DIMINISHING THAT ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY, WE IN THE UNITED NATIONS WILL DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO HELP.

AS YOU KNOW, THE HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS HAVE FOR SOME TIME BEEN ENGAGED IN PREPARING FOR THIS CONTINGENCY, EVEN WHILE WE HOPED IT COULD STILL BE AVERTED.

WE HAVE DONE OUR BEST TO ASSESS THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF WAR, IN TERMS OF POPULATION DISPLACEMENT AND HUMAN NEED, AND TO POSITION OUR PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT ACCORDINGLY. FOR THESE PREPARATIONS WE REQUESTED 123.5 MILLION DOLLARS FROM DONORS A MONTH AGO, BUT ONLY 45 MILLION HAVE BEEN PLEDGED, AND 34 MILLION DOLLARS RECEIVED, TO DATE. I'M AFRAID WE SHALL VERY SOON BE COMING BACK WITH AN APPEAL FOR MUCH LARGER SUMS, TO FINANCE ACTUAL RELIEF OPERATIONS AND I EARNESTLY HOPE THAT MEMBER STATES WILL RESPOND WITH GENEROSITY AND SPEED.

WE HAVE ALSO EXAMINED THE SITUATION CAUSED BY THE SUSPENSION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OIL-FOR-FOOD PROGRAMME IN IRAQ, AND WAYS THAT THE PROGRAMME COULD BE ADJUSTED TEMPORARILY, TO ENABLE US TO CONTINUE PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ DURING AND AFTER HOSTILITIES.

SUCH ADJUSTMENTS WOULD REQUIRE DECISIONS BY THIS COUNCIL. I WILL THEREFORE SUBMIT MY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR THE COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION - AS SUGGESTED IN YOUR NOTE, MR. PRESIDENT.

IN CONCLUSION, MR. PRESIDENT, LET ME EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT THE EFFORT TO RELIEVE THE SUFFERINGS OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE, AND TO REHABILITATE THEIR SOCIETY AFTER SO MUCH DESTRUCTION, MAY YET PROVE TO BE THE TASK AROUND WHICH THE UNITY OF THIS COUNCIL CAN BE REBUILT.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

NEGROPONTE